

Dear Task Force Members,

As we approach the end of the year, I want to take a moment to thank you for your service on the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force and to reflect on the tough work that we've done this year to address the challenges our community faces. Your continued commitment to work to encourage our youth to stay out of gangs and to intervene with those who have gotten involved with gang activity is something that I appreciate every day that I serve as Mayor.

As we conclude 2008, the data shows that we are beginning to make progress over last year. This is thanks to the hard work and collaboration by members of the Task Force. While other jurisdictions are seeing an increase in violent gang activity, San José is seeing a decrease in both aggravated and simple assaults. We understand that we can not arrest our way out of the gang problem and that being proactive is an important part of being successful, and for this I thank you.

In 2008, with the financial assistance from the District Attorney's Office, the Task Force funded the first Safe Summer Initiative. In total, 7,424 youth participated in 435 different activities. Such interventions made a difference. From the summers of 2007 to 2008, San José experienced a 31% decrease in overall gang crimes and a 26% decrease in violent gang crimes. On December 9, the City Council unanimously approved funding a second Safe Summer Initiative for summer 2009 and increased funding to \$500,000.

Over the last year, we also undertook a major task – the update of the strategic work plan. I want to acknowledge the hard work of all the city employees and the more than 1,000 residents who helped us shape this important policy document. In San José, we understand that the gang climate on the streets can change from day to day, and it is important for our plan to adjust to changing conditions if we are to remain effective.

The updated plan calls for the Task Force to increase the involvement by the community to address gang issues. Through the community engagement subcommittee, the Task Force hosted our First Annual Crime and Gang Prevention Summit. The summit provided training to over 300 community leaders and concerned residents. The summit is a great example of community engagement, and I want to thank all of the Task Force members who participated and helped put on this successful event.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the growing partnership between the schools and the Task Force, and thank the superintendents for their continued commitment to safety. We now have several new programs running in our middle schools that provide young people with positive alternatives to the gang life style. We know that gangs are recruiting kids at a younger age, and by working in partnership, we can show these young students that there are alternatives and they can make the right choices each day.

Once again, I want to extend my gratitude for the hard work and dedication that you have put into the Task Force this year, and I look forward to working with you in 2009.

Best wishes for a very Happy New Year.

Sincerely,



Chuck Reed
Mayor